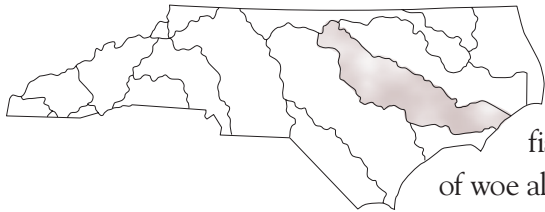


NEUSE RIVER BASIN

Stretching 248 miles from the Falls Lake Reservoir Dam in the Piedmont to its mouth at Pamlico Sound, the Neuse River is the longest river in North Carolina. At its mouth, it is the widest river in America—6 miles across.



It's not surprising that such a broad-reaching river has touched the lives of so many people. In the 1990s, however, floods, blooms of algae, fish kills and a toxic aquatic organism weaved a tale of woe along the Neuse. Through initiatives in response to these problems, lawmakers and champions of the river hope to begin a chapter of redemption for the 2-million-year-old Neuse.

The Neuse River Basin, whose other major tributaries include Crabtree, Swift and Contentnea creeks and the Eno, Little and Trent rivers, is one of only four river basins that lie entirely within the state's boundaries. The Neuse once began at the confluence of the Eno and Flat rivers, but now spills from Falls Lake Reservoir Dam above Raleigh.

Neuse River

KEN TAYLOR, NCVRC



NCWRC

After this impounded 22-mile beginning, it flows freely as a freshwater river until it reaches New Bern. Here it turns brackish, widens and travels sluggishly as it becomes a 40-mile-long tidal estuary that empties into the southern end of Pamlico Sound. The Neuse River Basin is North Carolina's third largest basin and contains roughly one-sixth of the state's population.

Since it feeds one of the nation's largest and most productive coastal estuaries (Albemarle-Pamlico), the Neuse has played a prominent role in the state's fishing history. The Albemarle-Pamlico estuary system is a nursery for 90 percent of the commercial seafood species caught in North Carolina. The rivers and streams of the Neuse River Basin are spawning areas for shad, herring, striped bass and other anadromous fish—species that live as adults in the ocean but migrate upriver to spawn in



ILLUSTRATION BY
DUANE RAYER



profile:

Total miles of streams and rivers: 3,880

Total acres of lakes: 16,414

Total acres of estuary: 369,977

Total miles of coastline: 21

Municipalities within basin: 74

Counties within basin: 18

Size: 6,235 square miles

Population: 1,320,379 (2000 U.S. Census)